Cherry Growing in New South Wales.

W. J. ALLEN and S. A. HOGG.

The cherry is not a drought-resisting tree, and districts favoured with a fair average rainfall should therefore be selected for its cultivation. The growing of cherries in New South Wales is practically confined to the highlands as, although experiments have been carried out in the warmer districts, results have proved unsatisfactory, owing to the fruit growing in such districts becoming affected with "gum." This congestion of sap (caused by intense heat) ultimately kills the trees as a rule, most of them dying at the age of seven to eight years.

Cherry soils may vary in texture, but, generally speaking, the deep red loam produces the largest and best quality fruit. Good drainage is also most important. A loam overlying sand or rubble is preferred, providing sufficient moisture is retained. Shallow loam on top of clay should be avoided, and heavy clay lands have proved most unsuitable, owing to their lack of drainage.

Planting.

In planting a cherry orchard, only one-year-old trees should be used, care being taken to see that the varieties selected have been worked on suitable stocks. The stocks used are either Kentish or Mazzard; some varieties do better on the former and some on the latter. If dwarf trees are required, Kentish stock should be used. The following varieties will be found to do well on the stocks bracketed beside them :—

St. Margaret	Kentish.	Early Lyons	Mazzard.
Florence		Eagle Seedling	
Early Purple Guigne		Bedford's Prolific	
Noble			
Napoleon			

Following is a list of selected cherries arranged according to their order of ripening :—Early Purple Guigne, Early Japonlay, Early Lyons, Black Republican, Bowyer's Early Heart, Black Tartarian, Governor Wood, Bigarreau de Mezel, Blackpost Bigarreau, Black Eagle, Florence, St. Margaret.

Canning.

Cherries are largely used for canning; the varieties selected for this purpose should be firm, light in colour, and large. Florence is one of the best canning cherries. Although most of the Kentish varieties of cherries are small, they are sometimes preferred for canning because of their aromatic and sub-acid flavour. Cherries are also used for making jams, jellies, and liqueurs.

Pruning.

Except to form a head, the cherry is not generally pruned; when necessary to shape or balance a tree, it is found that the best plan is to pinch back the young shoots. In the cool districts, if trees in bearing are pruned in the winter, little or no bad effect takes place; but in the warmer districts, winter pruning is apt to cause gumming from the effects of which the trees die in a few years.

Fertilisers.

Generally speaking, the cherry requires as little fertiliser as any fruit grown. An occasional crop of black tares, grown in the winter and ploughed under in the spring, will be found beneficial.

The mineral constituents of the cherry are: potash, 51·85 per cent.; soda, 1·12; magnesia, 5·46; lime, 7·74; phosphoric acid, 14·21; sulphuric acid, 5·09; and silicic acid, 9·04.

Phosphoric acid, potash and lime are the chief ingredients taken from the ground, and are therefore those that need to be restored. Several useful fertiliser mixtures for cherries will be found in the leaflet "Fertiliser Mixtures for the Orchard," copies of which are obtainable free on application to the Department.

Cultivation.

The cherry is not a very long-lived tree (the hardy varieties living from thirty to forty years) excepting under very favourable conditions. It is advisable to subsoil the land before planting. The trees should be planted from 20 to 24 feet apart, according to the richness of the soil. Trees on rich soil grow vigorously and to a good size, and therefore require extra space to accommodate their branches. The land should be ploughed at least once a year, cultivating from time to time so as to conserve moisture and prevent the growth of weeds.

Picking and Marketing.

Many varieties of the cherry are most delicate and very susceptible to injury, and the fruit must therefore be handled carefully; it should be gathered with the stalk intact, separating it carefully from the spurs or branches, as it keeps much better with the full stalk. The fruit should be gathered when dry and cool, and under rather than over ripe, and the bloom should be preserved on varieties which show any. The proper way to handle the fruit is by the stems. Varieties which bruise easily should be picked into shallow baskets holding about 10 lb.; kerosene tins which have been cut in halves for the purpose have also been found suitable. Care should be taken to see that the fruit spurs are not broken off at the time of picking.

The case which finds most favour with both growers and buyers is the 12 lb. case. At the time of packing, all stemless cherries should be rejected, and the top layer of fruit faced in rows with the stems hidden. This work can be done best by women and girls, who lay the cherries on the bottom of

the box in rows, fruit side down; then fill the box, nail on the bottom, and either turn over and mark the faced side as top, or stencil the case so that the properly-faced side will be opened, showing the cherries neatly rowed and presenting a very attractive appearance.

Diseases of the Cherry.

Cherry Tree Borer (Cryptophaga unipunctata, Don).—When a tree is found to be attacked by these grubs, remove all the felted web, and insert a bit of copper-wire into the burrow so as to injure the grub; if this cannot be managed, squirt a little kerosene oil into the hole and then plug it up. Some growers have found that dipping a wooden plug in kerosene and then driving it into the hole kills the grub.

San José Scale.—For this, spray (after the fruit is harvested) with resin, soda and fish oil in the summer, and lime-sulphur solution in the winter.

Rutherglen Bug.—As this bug attacks the ripe fruit, we have been unable to find anything to keep the trees free from it without at the same time damaging the fruit.

Pear Slug.—Spray with arsenate of lead (2 lb. to 50 gallons of water). Where the slug is found to be very destructive to the foliage, it is advisable to disturb the soil round the trunks of the trees, or apply lime so as to destroy the cocoons in the ground.

Brown Rot.—For brown rot spray with Bordeaux mixture or lime-sulphur (winter strength) when the buds are swelling, and again with Bordeaux mixture (summer strength) when the fruit has set.

Shot-hole Fungus.—This disease attacks the leaves, showing first as brown dots and later as small, round, dry patches, which fall out leaving a round hole. Spraying with Bordeaux mixture or lime-sulphur in the winter is recommended.

Gumming.—Gumming may result from either excess of, or want of, water in the soil; also from intense heat or heavy pruning. It is therefore not in itself considered a disease, but rather an indication of conditions unfavourable to the thrifty growth of the tree. The presence of gum is usually the beginning of the end, but some check may be given by opening the bark in the spring, inserting the blade of the knife lightly under it and making the incision from the base to where the first limbs branch out.

"WILL you kindly forward me your book on the cultivation of maize. As I go about I see better crops than I can raise and I am anxious to discover the reason."

The foregoing reached the Department in a recent mail—surely the spirit of the New Agriculture!